1. *Corrida* 10½ x 13¾

George Elmer Browne

1871 – 1946

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2. *Sculpture of George Elmer Browne* by M. Kalish, A.N.A.

Bronze height 19½"

LIFE FOR THE ARTIST is never a straight and clear pathway. Unlike any other manufacturer, the maker of paintings does not aim at the satisfaction of a simple need. To the contrary the work of an artist is a way of life, a reaction to his environment. Painting implies a poetry, a poetry formulated by the emotional being of the artist. The chameleonlike vicissitudes in the painting of so many of our contemporaries make for conversation in terms of the "periods" of the artist, but there is much to be said for the painter who remaining true to his natural response demonstrates virtuosity and growth, as did George Elmer Browne.

In painting, Browne demonstrated a clear definite point of view, an individual vision to which he adhered with great sincerity throughout his life. A critic writing for the New York Evening Post on January 28th, 1917, commenting on an exhibition of paintings by George Elmer Browne held at M. Knoedler and Company said, "One's first impression on entering the room is a sense of violent straining after the dramatic in composition. All these large canvases appear positively to elbow each other in their insistent claim on the spectator's attention. It is like being in a room full of people all speaking very loud and each one determined to be heard." This dramatic and restless reaching out to capture a new beauty and to organize it in puissant composition must have alarmed the critics during the years that his mature paintings were being introduced and assimilated. Six years later his different vision became an accepted part of the mainstream of American art, for by this time he was accepted and elected as an A. N. A.; nine years later in 1928 he became a full academician.

An education in art for the aspiring artist living in a comparatively small community in Massachusetts was not easily acquired and required perseverance and fortitude. Browne's strong talent which was manifest at an early age and an avid desire to learn carried him through what facilities were possible in his home state. After attending public school in Salem, Mass., he studied at the Museum of Fine Arts and the Cowles School of Art in Boston. After this meager beginning the National Academy of Design School in New York City and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts were possible in this country. For the artist in America the influence of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 had

introduced a stimulating alternative. At this exposition European artists had been introduced to the country. The few buyers of art worthy of the name of collector were attracted to the painters from Europe. The artists found the stimulation of the European artists challenging, the purely American Hudson River School, the early American romantic and genre painters paled in contrast with the Barbizon, Munich and the early Impressionist paintings. No longer could the native art schools offer the necessary assurance to the student. An art education must be completed by study in Europe in the academies of Paris, Munich, Antwerp or Italy.

Young George Elmer Browne caught up in this enthusiasm elected to study at the Academy Julian in Paris. The critics at the Academy at that time were Jules Lefebvre and Tony Robert-Fleury. It was at the Academy Julian that Eakins, Bridgeman, Thayer and Alden Weir along with many of the other American painters had studied.

The Paris art scene was exciting and stimulating for American art students studying there at that time. It represented truly "la vie de Boheme". Art education was difficult and the focus was on drawing rather than painting in the schools. "The Life and Letters of Julian Alden Weir" contain vivid descriptions of the life at the Atelier Julian at the time that he was a student there. This book also conveys the surge of enthusiasm which the art students felt for these new surroundings. Miss Cecelia Beaux, the American portraitist so popular at the turn of the century, in her autobiography gives a further insight into the Atelier Julian. The "atelier" begun as a commercial venture proved most popular. Art students congregated there from all over the world. The classes became so crowded that it was impossible to paint and only drawing could be taught. There was room only for drawing and the academy presented an opportunity to learn to draw the human figure in the classic tradition. Students were invited to visit the studios of their critics and this was one of the few opportunities they had to learn about the technique of painting. This instruction plus the interminable discussions with their classmates along with visiting each other where they were living and which was the place where all the painting had to be done was how the art student in Paris learned to paint.

Browne, on his arrival in Paris, had already developed an individual style of painting: he was a skillful and competent craftsman. It was this ability that he brought to Paris. The milieu in which the artist found himself was one where the artist was respected and people everywhere were willing and ready to point out his deficiencies and his good points. This vastly different art world that Paris represented provided a training which George Elmer Browne could never have gained in the staid, quiet atmosphere of Boston. Browne realized as much as he could from the experience and discussing it later, in retrospect, felt that these years of study had been most important in his development. They furnished him with an assurance that would carry him with certainty for the rest of his life as an artist and as a teacher. What Browne brought back from Paris was a strong Yankee personality shaped, developed and matured in the Parisian School. His draughtsmanship, always outstanding, became more powerful from the study of the figure at Atelier

Julian. Browne had an innate sense of composition which gave his pictures a rounded measure of expression of the artistic idea. The training in Paris further gave him an understanding of a workmanlike attitude and a drive which assured his success in a period of American art that was fraught with peril. A period when all standards and certainty were to topple and artists were to scramble madly to climb aboard the bandwagon, found Browne able to maintain his faith in his own vision and confidence in his ability to express himself with an aesthetic integrity. Many years later in Provincetown, he would recall with pleasure his years in Paris, the friendships he had made, the parties, the art students' balls and the great camaraderie he had experienced. No wall flower, he was very active in the pleasures Latin Quarter made available to art students.

Upon his return to this country he set up a studio and began painting. An exhibition at the Mechanics Fair in Boston in 1895 brought the artist one of the first of the many awards and prizes he was to win in his lifetime. The year 1919 brought him his election as an A.N.A. and 1928 full Academician status. His success was assured. Elsewhere (on the last page of this booklet) a complete listing of the honors bestowed upon him is given. It is a very impressive list.

In terms of personal satisfaction and achievement the summers in Provincetown were probably the greatest of his life. His association with his colleagues, his classes, the admiration and respect gained from them and the great output of paintings through those years must have paid him great dividends in happiness. It was during those years that I made his acquaintance and later gained his friendship. I first met him at the Beachcombers, a fraternal organization, consisting of men actively and professionally engaged in the arts. His warm personality and friendliness drew people to him. It is understandable why his classes were popular. He had a distinct air of self confidence that enabled him to meet anyone with the mutual respect that his manner indicated. At no time did he indulge in the petty jealousies which too often are to be found in the summer art colonies, and yet with it all he maintained a sincere and distinct modesty.

There is a magical aura which still surrounds Provincetown. Today the aura is almost an afterglow of the wonderful things that happened there during the first half of the century. The magic was brought about by some of the artists who lived there during those years, but still more it was brought about by a combination of the people who were there, the times, the place itself, and the combining of these factors. Among others in the early years were: Eugene O'Neill and the Provincetown Theater, Harry Kemp, the Hobo Poet, Susan Glaspel, John Dos Passos, Manny Zoro, the wonderful Portuguese fisherman who became an actor in order to join the Beachcombers' Club and the countless painters whose names it would take too long to list.

Strangely, the emergence of Provincetown in the history of art really began in the Shinnecock Hills near Southampton on Long Island. William Merritt Chase founded an art school and the first summer art colony there. His assistant was an ambitious young man who had a great talent for paint-

ing and a greater talent for teaching whose name was Charles Hawthorne. When Chase discontinued his classes in the "Art Village" as it is still called in Southampton, Hawthorne intending to carry on, rushed to Southampton only to find that the studio and most of the cottages that surrounded it were sold. He remembered the quaint little fishing village at the end of Cape Cod that he had visited the year before and went to Provincetown to begin the art classes that were to lead to Provincetown's great reputation as an art and cultural center. His classes proved most popular; students flocked to him from all over the country. The peculiar beauty and charm of the small fishing village seemed to offer an emotional release, an escape from reality especially from the all consuming industrial revolution which was engulfing the country. Other artists were attracted, along with the students, who wanted to paint the picturesque fisherman, their boats, the phenemonal atmospheric conditions and enjoy the rustic beauty of the town and the stimulating effect of its beaches. By the year 1916 there were five art schools advertised in the catalog of the Provincetown Art Association: The West End School of Art, George Elmer Browne; A Summer School of Painting, E. Ambrose Webster; The Cape Cod School of Art, Charles W. Hawthorne with assistant Oscar Giebich and director Harry N. Campbell; A Modern School of Art, Brior J. O. Nordfeldt, William Zorach, M. Musselman Car, Frederick Burt, and Marguerite Zorach; George Senseany's class in monochrome and color etching. The Hawthorne Class, the Browne Class and the Webster Class were the only classes to survive more than two seasons.

Browne's classes proved to be most popular. The artist teacher had the ability to make the student glad that his picture could receive kindly, knowledgeable criticism. George Elmer in criticizing the student work was most reassuring; the student felt that there was nothing that could not be done. Needless to say, he would not encourage an aspiring student who had no talent. In a kindly way he conveyed to the untalented neophyte that there were other arts where his talent might be better directed. In teaching he constantly stressed the importance of composition. Even the simplest drawing, he emphasized, should hold together. His students usually ended the summer with an impressive group of paintings that they had completed under his instruction. "Drawing," he frequently said, "should be like writing a letter to a friend. It should aim more at conveying a personal reaction to the subject rather than a display of virtuosity." "Avoid all mannerisms." he constantly cautioned.

The last few years of his life were great years. The honors bestowed on him he carried with a charming modesty. He enjoyed the sessions at the Beachcombers and the evenings at the Salmagundi Club, particularly as the evening became mellow for it was then that he would relate the fascinating stories that made up his life. The New England years, the Paris years, the early Provincetown years, other times at the Beachcombers and the Salmagundi Club, the politics of the Allied Artists of America, over which he had been president for seven years, the heated controversies at the National Academy as younger artists demanded recognition, his travels in remote areas of the world seeking the perfect idiom for his insatiable talent: Brit-

tany, Spain, the Grand Banks off Maine, the Basque country, Paris, Corsica, Venice, Quebec, and the Gaspe.

Always a great traveler, Browne sought out the type of landscape which would serve as subject matter for his unique style of painting. On his travels he would constantly sketch, recording the details to be used later in his larger compositions. He had a fabulous memory for detail and almost complete recall which enabled him to work the little sketches and color notes into the larger magnificent paintings. He had a great faculty for conveying the feeling of water and the undulating movement of boats on its surface. This subject was to be used in many of his canvases. He could paint a sky with such interest that even though he occasionally let the sky occupy two thirds of the canvas it sustained an interest throughout. He urged his students to sketch constantly and always study nature as the prime source of all inspiration. On his trips he would frequently take groups of students with him. The many amusing incidents which would delight him were the subjects for stories at the Beachcombers or in the comfortable lounge of the Salmagundi Club. His white cotton hats which he constantly wore in Provincetown were always a welcome sight, if one had the time to hear his latest anecdote or to listen to some new plan for the "Arts Ball" or the "Combers Clambake". He was well liked by his colleagues and his close friendships with William Paxton, Max Bohm, Richard Miller, Gifford Beal and Ambrose Webster provided him with a sense of well being and afforded him an opportunity to indulge in some "high-jinks". The annual clambake which the Beachcombers used to raise money and as an occasion to bring together all the art students, writers, painters, actors and musicians were very gay affairs. George Elmer Browne was always there helping to prepare the food, introducing his students and engaging in light banter.

3. *George E. Browne* by Frank Russel Green 9¼ x 7

In 1944 he was offered a post at Mary Washington College at the University of Virginia. He was to formulate the direction of the art education at that body of learning. At the time, Browne was 73 years old but his youthful, dapper appearance belied his years. One hesitates to assume new responsibilities as the years advance and Browne was no exception to this rule for his first reaction was to decline with thanks but he had always felt a sense of responsibility which involved "passing on the torch" to the art students who would follow him. He accepted.

Two years later in Provincetown he suffered a heart attack which was to prove fatal. George Elmer Browne will always remain a great champion of the naturalistic school in America. The great number of superb, poetic paintings which he left us will always bear mute testimony to his greatness and his love of nature.

George Albert Perret

4. *The Silo* 44 x 50

5. *Barnyard* 10½ x 13¾

6. *Dejeuners dehors* 10½ x 13¾

7. *Tree Lined Road* 10½ x 13¾

8. *The Circus* 10½ x 13¾

9. *Montmartre* 15 x 18

10. *Fishing Village in Brittany* 10½ x 13¾

11. *Paysage* 10½ x 13¾

12. *Low Tide* 20 x 24

. *East River Bridge* 10½ x 13¾

14. *Tinting the Sail* 25½ x 31¾

15. *Tangiers* Watercolor 13½ x 18½

16. *Rowboats off Shore* Watercolor 11¼ x 13½

17. *Study* Watercolor 20 x 14

18. *Brittany Village* 21 x 25½

19. *Gondolas* 10½ x 13¾

20. *Brittany Coast* 10½ x 13¾

21. *Moret* 13 x 18

22. *Bridge in Morocco* 40 x 50

23. *The Slave Market* 35 x 36

24. *Piercy Rock* 25 x 30

25. *Provincetown* 15 x 18

26. *Figures at Shore* 10½ x 13¾

27. *Sailboats at Mooring* 10½ x 13¾

28. *Three Seated Men* 10½ x 13¾

29. *Pulp Mill* 15 x 18

30. *Summer in Brittany* 10½ x 13¾

31. *Brittany Houses* 10½ x 13¾

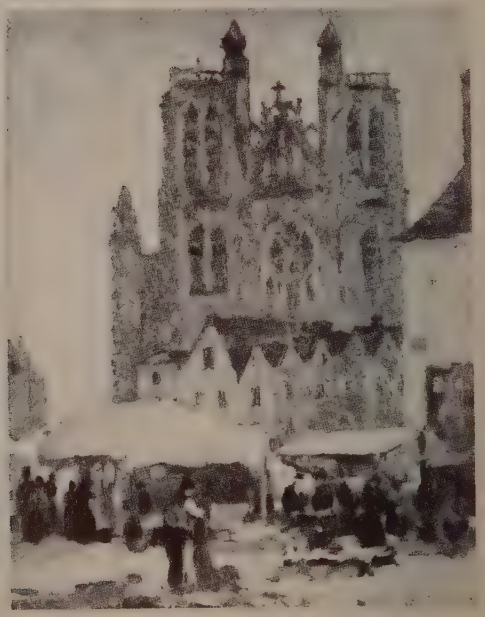
32. *The Bridge* Watercolor 14 x 20½

33. *Cloudy Landscape* 10½ x 13¾

34. *Wagon in Landscape* 38 x 51

35. *Wagon and Team* Watercolor 13 x 18

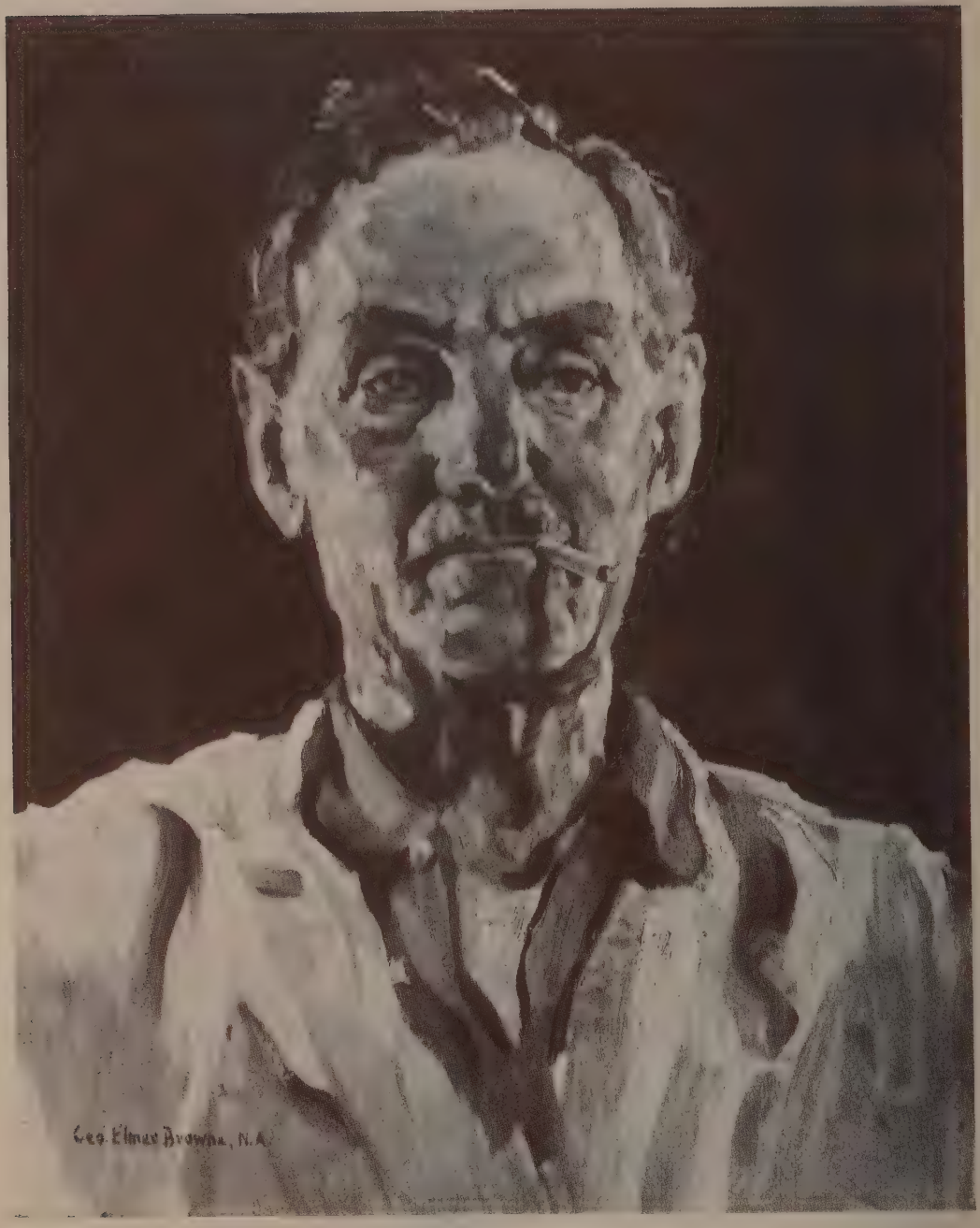
36. *Arab Street Scene* 10½ x 13¾



37. *Market near Cathedral* 13¾ x 10½

38. *Street Market* 13¾ x 10½

39. *Street Scene at Dusk* 10½ x 13¾



40. *The Captain* 20 x 16

41. *Full Sail in Storm* 13¾ x 10½

42. *The Sea* 15 x 18

GEORGE ELMER BROWNE, N. A.

(From WHO'S WHO)

MR. BROWNE'S WORK is to be found in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The National Gallery at Washington, D.C.; The Chicago Art Institute and The Union League Club, Chicago; The Luxembourg Galleries, Paris; The Montpellier Museum, France; The Montclair Museum of Art, Montclair, N.J.; The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio; The Art Association and The University Club, Milwaukee, Wis.; The Erie Art Club, Erie, Pa.; The Harrison Collection of The Los Angeles Art Museum, Los Angeles, Cal.; The New York Public Library, The National Arts Club, The Salmagundi Club and the Lotos Club of New York City; The Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.; The Omaha Museum of Art, Omaha, Neb.; The High Museum of Arts, Atlanta, Ga., 1922; The Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, Alabama; The Museum at Cahors, France; The Collection of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis. He has received numerous prize awards at various important exhibitions of art, including The Altman Prize of $500.00 at (1934) exhibition of the National Academy of Design, New York, and the Gold Medal of Honor awarded (1934) at the Annual Exhibition of The Allied Artists of America, held at The Brooklyn Museum, N.Y.; Medal, Mechanics Fair, Boston, 1895; Book Plate Prize Salmagundi Club, 1898, Geo. Innes, Jr. Prize Salmagundi Club, 1901, Ranger Fund purchase National Academy of Design, 1929, Isidor Prize Salmagundi Club, 1916 and 1918. Vezan Prize Salmagundi Club, 1919, Shaw Prize of $1,000 Salmagundi Club, 1920, Trumbell Prize Salmagundi Club, 1921, Tuthill Prize, Chicago Art Institute, 1923, Water Color Prize, Baltimore Art Club, 1926, Shaw Water Color Prize Salmagundi Club, 1927, William Church Osborn Prize, American Water Color Society, 1936, Gold Medal Allied Artists of America, 1928, Lithograph Prize, Salmagundi Club, 1932, Rodney Wilcox Jones Prize National Arts Club, 1931, Gregg Memorial Prize National Arts Club, 1933, Carrington Prize Salmagundi Club, 1937. Awarded Layman's Prize Salmagundi Club, 1938 and 1940. Adolph and Clara Obrig Prize, American Water Color Society, 1938. National Arts Club Prize, 1939. His painting, "Bait Sellers of Cape Cod," was purchased from the Paris Salon of 1904 by the French Government. He was president of The Allied Arts of America from 1930 to 1937 and is a member of The National Arts Club, The Lotos Club, The National Academy of Design, The Salmagundi Club, The New York Water Color Club, The American Water Color Society, The Painter Gravers of America, The Brooklyn Society of Etchers, The Century Club, The National Institute of Arts and Letters, The Aquarellists Society, The Artists Fund Society, New York, The National Commission to Advance American Art, The Artists Professional League, The Municipal Art Society of New York City, The American Fine Arts Foundation, The Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, The American Society of Etchers, and The American Art Association, Paris. He studied Art at The School of Drawing and Painting connected with The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and at The Academy Julian, Paris, under Jules LeFebvre and Tony Robert Fleury. He was president of the Salmagundi Club, New York City, 1936-37.

Mr. Browne was decorated by the French Government in 1925 and is Officer of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, France, and in 1926 he was made Chevalier of The French Legion of Honor. He conducted Classes abroad 1922, '25, '27, '29. Former Instructor, Grand Central School of Art, New York; Founder and Instructor, Browne Art Class, Provincetown. He has a studio at 1 West 67th St., New York City (TRafalgar 7-3675; house phone ENdicott 2-6700). His summer home and studio is at Provincetown, Mass.

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